

BETWEEN FLORENCE AND AVIGNON

ot the supreme consolation of their religion : *Lo pan che il pio padre a nessun serra*. Men and women thronged the churches to sing psalms and hymns ; incessant processions were made through the streets, bearing relics of the saints ; as many as five thousand flagellants passed along, scourging their bare shoulders, while twenty thousand persons followed; the commandments of the Church were kept as they had never been before, and for every one that practised his religion when the Mass was said, there were now a hundred. A number of noble and wealthy young men formed a confraternity which met at Fiesole, devoting themselves to austerity and works of charity, especially labouring to convert fallen women, whom they clothed and provided with means to live an honest life ; others gave up everything, and went about begging alms for the poor : "And this matter was so spread abroad that it seemed verily that they wished to conquer the Pope by humility, and to be obedient to the Church."¹ The government looked with great suspicion upon this movement, but took no active steps to check it. There was simultaneously a recrudescence of activity among the Fraticelli, those *frati della povera vita*, who held that the condemnation of poverty by John XXII had been "the condemnation of the life of Christ," and that neither he nor his successors were lawful popes. Poverty being the law of Christ, the Court of Avignon was the devil's synagogue. The sacraments were invalid if administered by an unworthy priest.² Numbers of Florentines, men and women, began to affect their doctrines, especially now that they seemed justified by the attitude of the papal court towards the Italians.

The fact was that, at this stage in the conflict, all Florence was united against the Pope ; adherents of the Parte Guelfa were agreed with those of the Otto della Guerra that the Republic must defend her rights and liberties. Men like Don Giovanni dalle Celle had no doubt as to where the duties of every citizen lay. "I have heard news of thee

¹ Marchionne Stefani, Lib. IX. rubr. 757. Cf. Dante, *Par.* xviii. 127-129. ^a Cf. Tocco, 7 *Fraticelli*, pp. 341-353.